

The ETFSS Process

Thank You to the Members of the Elders' Task Force on Structures and Systems

At General Conference XIV (1989 at Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minnesota, USA), the Board of Elders called upon the UFMCC to study how our international dimension is reflected in our structures and systems. At the same time, General Conference itself called upon the Board of Elders to prepare a new procedure for determining District boundaries that would eliminate potential conflicts of interest.

In response to the above, the Board of Elders established the Elders Task Force on Structures and Systems (ETFSS) in 1990, appointing lay and clergy people who would bring different perspectives to the work. ETFSS included pastors of small, medium and large churches; laity and clergy; programmers; a District Coordinator and an Elder; and residents from Australia, Canada, England and the United States. The former and present members of ETFSS are:

Rev. David Farrell (Chair until February 1992), Southwest District
Rev. Wendy Foxworth (Chair since February 1992), South Central District
Mr. Bernard Barbour, South Central District, Executive Director of the Department of People of Colors
Rev. Elder Darlene Garner, Mid-Atlantic District
Rev. Brent Hawkes (appointed October 1993), Eastern Canadian District
Ms. Christine Messenger, European District, Lay Person
Rev. Christine Oscar, Gulf Lower Atlantic District
Mr. Elder Larry Rodriguez, Southwest District
Ms. JoNee Shelton, South Central District, Chair of the Commission on Laity
Rev. Greg Smith, Australian District
Rev. Larry Uhrig (resigned October 1993), Mid-Atlantic District

ETFSS began meeting in March of 1991 and was given the following charge:

1. Review and assess the procedure for establishing District boundaries and bring recommendations for a new procedure which reduces the possibility of conflict of interest in boundary decisions.
2. Review and assess Fellowship and District/World Church Extension level structures and systems, giving particular attention to the results and impact of structural changes adopted in 1985.
3. Conduct an assessment of needs felt by clergy and lay people of UFMCC churches regarding Fellowship and District/WCE level structures; review previous needs assessment efforts and long-range planning processes conducted since 1985.
4. Review the international impact and implications of UFMCC structures and systems at every level.
5. Present findings and, if deemed appropriate by the Task Force, present recommendations for action and/or structural change.

ETFSS distributed needs assessment surveys to every segment of UFMCC and reported the results of those surveys at General Conference XV (1991, Phoenix, Arizona). At that conference ETFSS reported on its progress and the General Conference referred a proposed Bylaw amendment to ETFSS for further study. The Bylaw amendment stated "The Board of Directors/local church administrative body shall report all church receipts each month to the UFMCC and the District, and with that report shall remit tithes on the funds reported. The percentage of tithes remitted shall be: 9% to the UFMCC, 6% to the District, 1995-1996; 8% to the UFMCC, 7% to the District, 1997-1998; 7% to the UFMCC, 8% to the District, 1999-2000; 6% to the UFMCC, 9% to the District, 2001-2002; and then thereafter 5% to the UFMCC, 10% to the District".

Between General Conference 1991 and General Conference 1993, ETFSS conducted local church, district and denominational workshops and forums on governmental structures and systems; met with the Board of Elders, the General Council, UFMCC programmers and with members of World Church Extension churches; solicited written input from UFMCC programmers, executive staff and all district committees; and made a presentation to General Conference XVI (1993, Phoenix, Arizona U.S.A.).

The 1993 ETFSS report was received by General Conference. That report stated that based on local church needs there was no one universal model of structure or set of Bylaws that could adequately address the diverse



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026 with funding from
CLIR DHC Grant 2026-2028

<https://archive.org/details/2174.15.31>

cultural, legal and financial issues of all our church bodies worldwide. Regarding the Bylaw amendment referred to ETFSS concerning redistribution of tithe and assessments, ETFSS recommended that no redistribution of tithes happen at that time. Then ETFSS developed a study guide which asked delegates to explore three different models of structure that might help redistribute resources to the local church. Delegates were asked to respond to the questions asked in the study guide by June of 1994.

ETFSS collated the responses to the study guide and found the following to be the expressed needs of UFMCC local churches:

1. That the UFMCC keep the current structure and create ways within the current structure to bring increased flexibility that would allow local churches and Districts to structure themselves in ways that honor and address their unique cultural needs.
2. That local churches need increased leadership training and educational resources for the purpose of empowering their laity and clergy to enable church growth in both spirit and number.
3. The cost of governance at the UFMCC level needs to be less costly so that local churches can keep more resources to do ministry on a local level. Additionally, those responding to the study guide wanted to see our General Conference focus more on ministry than business where local church delegates would be able to increase time spent in celebration, worship, and educational and training workshops rather than in business meetings. Respondents overwhelmingly responded positively to naming our General Conference the World Jubilee with General Conference being the name of the business meeting that would be held as a part of the Jubilee. Also, respondents felt that 10 years between World Jubilees would be too long of a time yet were open to considering a period of time between Jubilees in the range of 3 to 5 years.
4. That more money be directed to the districts from the UFMCC 10% tithe money to produce stronger districts and as a result increased local church growth. At present, districts vary greatly in geographical size, numbers and size of churches and resources available for growth. Some districts have part-time salaried District Coordinators and few funds for support of local churches. Other districts have full-time District Coordinators, additional salaried staff and resources for travel budgets and support for their local churches. No mechanism presently exists to address these inequities.
5. That there is a need for qualified, trained, skilled and adequately compensated full-time leaders (District Coordinators, Elders and Pastors) to empower local church growth.
6. It has become apparent in the ETFSS process how great a need there is to more clearly embrace and make World Church Extension an integral part of the UFMCC. Through extensive discussion we have come to realize that whatever is done in and to World Church Extension must be done through the participation of the churches and personnel living and doing ministry in World Church Extension areas. In addition, any process undertaken towards change must have integrity and mutuality as it relates to access, representation, economics and education in all the realms of ministry. Members in World Church Extension are equal partners and co-creators of the UFMCC.

Based on the above responses to the Study Guide the ETFSS submitted a 56-page report for consideration by the Board of Elders at their October 1994 meeting that provided potential solutions to the needs identified by study guide responses from clergy and lay members of the Denomination.

In January 1995, the Board of Elders convened a joint meeting and consultation between the Board of Elders and ETFSS, the Director of Administration, the World Church Extension Administrator, and representatives from the District Coordinators, Samaritan College, and the Clergy Credentials and Concerns Committee to review the preliminary report. At the March 1995 General Council meeting, the Chair of ETFSS on behalf of the Board of Elders met with the District Coordinators to receive their input on the recommendations for structural change that resulted from the consultation meeting in January. Reverend Foxworth then facilitated a forum with the General Council to discuss District Coordinator and Elders' concerns regarding the proposed recommendations. With the response received at the March General Council meeting, the Elders then created the recommendations for structural change as presented in this document.

The Board of Elders expresses appreciation to the members of the Elders Task Force on Structures and Systems, and to all who participated in the process during the past five years.

